(c) the details of the initiatives taken, if any, to deal with such indirect violation of the spirit of WTO ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY) : (a) The projected annual GDP growth rate of 8% during the Tenth Five Year Plan does not depend largely on the performance of any one sector, but on the balanced development of the entire economy.

(b) At the moment, there does not appear to be any deep rooted international conspiracy to discourage Indian IT professionals and entrepreneurs from harnessing the global market. However, the kind of incidents that have taken plan in Malaysia, Indonesia, Netherlands and England appear to be linked to economic recession the world over.

(c) Liberalisation of visa and other procedure for visits of professionals for supply of services in WTO member countries is one issue which India has been taking up actively during the WTO negotiations on Trade in Services presently underway in the WTO under the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

Bilateral Free Trade Agreement with Singapore

3875. SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH :
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :
SHRI DATTA MEGHE :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether India and Singapore have decided to take an important step closer towards a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA);

(b) if so, whether any concrete measures in this regard have been taken along with the details thereof;

(c) to what extent India is likely to be benefited by this trade agreement;

(d) whether this question was also discussed during the Singapore Prime Minister's visit to India;

(e) if so, the decisions taken; and

(f) the other agreements signed between the two countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY) : (a) to (c) India and Singapore have decided to launch negotiations towards a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement. A Declaration of Intent to this effect was concluded between the Commerce and Industry Ministers and the Trade Minister of Singapore in New Delhi on April 8, 2003. The negotiations will take place in the framework of the report of a Joint Study Group, which had been set up by the two Prime Minister during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Singapore in April 2002, to study the scope and structure of a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement.

(d) to (f) The report of the Joint Study Group was presented to the two Prime Ministers during the official visit to India by the Singapore Prime Minister on April 7–9, 2003. The two Prime Ministers also discussed follow-up action on the recommendations of the Joint Study Group. The visit of the Singapore Prime Minister provided an opportunity for review of bilateral relations and for an exchange of views among the leadership of the two countries on regional and international issues of mutual interest. India and Singapore also signed a Declaration of Intent on an India-Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, and a Memorandum of Understanding providing for collaboration between the two countries for extending technical assistance to Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, under the initiative for ASEAN Integration. The CECA, when negotiated and implemented, is expected to be of mutual benefit to both the countries in view of the extent of economic complementarities existing between the two countries.

Export of garments, gems and jewellery

3876. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRASEKAR REDDY : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether exports from India have declined considerably particularly in garments, gems and jewellery in the year 2002-03 as compared to the year 2001-2002;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether any assessment has been made in this regard; and

(d) if so, the steps that will be considered by Government to check this decline in Indian exports?